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Lizotte, Christopher

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ARTICLE

The mainstreaming of “vulgar territory” and popular visions of hyper-bordered and feminized territory

Christopher Lizotte^{1,2,3} 

¹Department of Geosciences and Geography, Spatial Politics, Planning, and Policy research group, University of Helsinki, Finland

²The Finnish Centre of Excellence in Relational and Territorial Politics of Bordering, Identities and Transnationalization (RELATE), University of Helsinki, Finland

³University of Helsinki Institute for Urban and Regional Studies (Urbaria), Finland

Correspondence

Christopher Lizotte, Department of Geosciences and Geography, Spatial Politics, Planning, and Policy research group, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland.
Email: christopher.lizotte@helsinki.fi

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Abstract

I lay out a case for recognizing “vulgar territory,” a fusing of superficial categories of spatial sovereignty with identarian rhetorics of belonging. I argue that vulgar territory is composed of two primary elements: first, a simplistic conception of sovereignty as being entirely contiguous with state borders. Second, affective elements of spatial belonging, particularly hope and fear. These two basic elements combine in various ways depending on the particular meanings, images, and emotions that are assembled in particular geohistorical contexts. I show this with a rough typology of “vulgates” of hyper-bordered and feminized territory by examining recent examples from around the world.

KEYWORDS

affect, feminized territory, hyper-bordered territory, sovereignty, vulgar territory

1 | INTRODUCTION

Like many populist leaders worldwide, U.S. President Donald Trump makes constant use of Twitter as a mechanism for unfiltered communication and provocation. On July 14, 2019, he transmitted the following:

So interesting to see “Progressive” Democrat Congresswomen, who originally came from countries whose governments are a complete and total catastrophe, the worst, most corrupt and inept

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anywhere in the world (if they even have a functioning government at all), now loudly...and viciously telling the people of the United States, the greatest and most powerful Nation [sic] on earth, how our government is to be run. Why don't they go back and help fix the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came. Then come back and show us how...it is done. These places need your help badly, you can't leave fast enough. I'm sure that [Speaker of the House of Representatives] Nancy Pelosi would be very happy to quickly work out free travel arrangements!

This remark, spread over three tweets, stands out for its infamy among a group of infamous remarks. Trump's reasoning ignores the *de jure* origins of his targets and instead rests on an essentialist logic of identity; regardless of their citizenship, these women of color on the left are defined by their cultural, not legal ties. Three of the members of Congress referred to by the president, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ayanna Pressley, and Rashida Tlaib, "came from" the United States; the fourth, Ilhan Omar, is a naturalized citizen of the United States.

This tweet is breathtaking for its racist geographic logic, but it is a logic that is increasingly being reembraced by electoral majorities across the world. One of the most confounding aspects of the current wave of ultra-nationalist and nativist politics is the degree to which "demographic fever dreams" (Gökanksel, Neubert, & Smith, 2019), dystopian tales of population invasion and replacement, are becoming increasingly banalized in political discourse. Many insurgent political movements worldwide are successfully appealing to voters who feel abandoned by traditional center-left and center-right parties with identarian narratives filtered through place-based authenticity.

There is nothing new about the use of geographic knowledge and imagery to promote exclusionary narratives of spatial belonging: the concept of being born of one's homeland, autochthony, is at least as old as the myths of ancient Greece (Elden, 2013), and "blood and soil"—*Blut und Boden*—is a constantly recurring trope that mobilizes support for removing "illegitimate" populations from places (Kiernan, 2007). What I want to highlight in this short article is the degree to which recent political movements of a far-right or revanchist character draw on hybrid notions of territory to make their claims. Although some of the actors involved represent the state, as with Trump above, others are located outside the state, even at the margins of mainstream society. What they share, however, is their tendency to "play at" state-territorial practices: on the one hand faintly aping legalistic and statutory norms of citizenship, bordering and other conventions of territory, and on the other by applying these principles with bluntness and brutality, sometimes outdoing state-territorial practices in this respect. I use the term "vulgar" territory to signal this not as a new approach to territory per se, but to refocus existing geographic theories on spatial belonging so as to capture this operationalization of territory.

The word "vulgar" is meant literally and denotes popular notions of territory: that is, not how scholars understand territory, but how territory is "experienced at the level of the actor" (cf. Coakley, 2018). While geographers have developed deep understandings of how territory has developed as a technology of state spatiality (e.g., Elden, 2013), this work tends to focus on territorial understandings that derive from the state rather than those generated from the ground up, so to speak. Here, the focus is on actors, largely those outside the state, who aspire to versions of territoriality that exceed existing state practice in its potential for exclusion and separation. Other work, especially in feminist political geography and geopolitics, has developed critical analyses of social, emotional, and embodied instances of territory (e.g., Mayer, 2004; Smith, Swanson, & Gökanksel, 2016), but this article focuses instead on decidedly *uncritical* understandings of territory in which sovereignty is coterminous with bordered space.

Methodologically speaking, vulgar territory acts as a lens to understand why recent examples of exclusionary territorial visions and practices generate consent and enthusiasm among their adherents. It directs our attention to how proposals to exclude, deport, or even cleanse groups from places must appeal to logical *and* emotional aspects of human consciousness in order to find mass support. This is important if we are to take such proposals seriously as making sense to their proponents. It requires not only understanding how a tweet like Trump's drips with a racist and sexist vision of national belonging—which would be obvious from a critical or feminist geopolitics point of view—but how such discourse sublimates into an aspirational territorial doctrine for millions of his followers.

I begin by reviewing scholarship in the two areas I argue are fundamental to the vulgar territorial outlook: a fixation on the state and territorial sovereignty as markers of political legitimacy, and affective elements of spatial belonging. I then trace some combinations of these elements through what I identify as two variations, or vulgates, of vulgar territory: *hyper-bordered* and *feminized* vulgar territory. Although these categories certainly can and do overlap, I argue that they provide a useful heuristic for distinguishing underlying rationalities among a diverse set of contemporary movements. Finally, I conclude with some thoughts for how thinking through vulgar territory and its subcategories can help us begin to make sense of the cacophony of nativist and ultranationalist political actors that are attempting to reintroduce extraordinary territorial exclusion to mainstream politics.

2 | VULGAR TERRITORY, PART 1: TERRITORIAL CONTAINERS AND SOVEREIGNTY

Although at one time territory suffered from a lack of conceptual precision (Jessop, Brenner, & Jones, 2008; Paasi, 2003), geographers have developed a nuanced perspective on it as a particular modality of socio-spatial governance. This view has been codified by a variety of studies, particularly Elden (2010, 2013), that have situated territory as a geohistorically specific form developed during the European Enlightenment. There has also been considerable work devoted to understanding how the establishment of state territory is a project that is, from its very origins, one steeped in various forms of violence as borders are established and maintained and marginalized identities are suppressed (e.g., Elden, 2009).

What is perhaps most remarkable about the modernist state-territorial ideal, however, is its remarkable ideological tenacity. This is an issue taken up by Murphy (2013) in his investigation of territory's continuing "allure." As he notes, the fundamental reorganization of socio-spatial relationships during the period of neoliberal globalization has done little to shake the basic conception of the political-territorial order rooted in the modern nation-state as the basic unit of sovereignty. If, as Agnew (1999) has persuasively argued, forms of socio-spatial organization comprise ideological as well as material and functional elements (see also Agnew, 2011), why has the reworking of space into networked, relational, and transnational forms (e.g., Massey, Amin, & Thrift, 2003; Mitchell & Kallio, 2017) not produced a similarly decisive shift in ways of thinking about space?

Murphy describes several concepts already present in human geography that can help explain how inherent qualities of state territory perpetuate themselves *conceptually* as well as materially and politically, and suggests that the principle of self-determination is exemplary of that phenomenon. As he shows, self-determination is a legal mechanism that is firmly rooted in a modernist state-territorial conception of territory. Ironically, it precludes forms of self-determination, such as secession, that challenge existing territorial arrangements (p. 1218). Other legalistic principles deriving from state territory, such as territorial integrity, similarly support the maintenance of the territorial status quo. Territorial integrity was used following September 11, 2001, by the United States and its allies to justify their incursions into Iraq and Afghanistan to the United Nations (Elden, 2005, 2009). In another example, Catalonia's declaration of independence from Spain in 2017 was recognized neither by the U.N. nor by any sovereign state. Many states cited Spain's right to territorial integrity in their reasoning, and described Catalonia's declaration as "unilateral" or implied that it was illegal ("Catalan declaration of independence," n.d.).

It is not surprising that states and organizations made up of states would consider territorial integrity, which is basic to their existence, an inviolable principle. What is interesting, however, is the degree to which statist territoriality organizes the worldview of groups and individuals not explicitly tied to the state apparatus. Koch (2015) identifies as the most important contribution of Paasi's seminal 1996 work *Territories, Boundaries, and Consciousness* the notion that spatial socialization that leads not only to a "state effect," but also to a "territory effect" among common people. The territory effect can be directed at a variety of scales, including but not limited to the state, but it is always at some notion of a bounded territory. This is also explored by Schlottmann (2008), who investigates the prevalence of

“containerization” in press coverage of German reunification. She points to the “practical necessity” of containerized language despite the prevalence of relational and networked spatial arrangements.

On an intuitive level, the need for reductionist two-dimensional spatial metaphors to make sense of the world in its complexity is perfectly understandable. However, as Schlottmann argues, critical geographers have tended to label such thinking as problematic without necessarily investigating the basis of its conceptual inertia. And yet examples of everyday popular conceptions of the primacy of bordered territory can be seen in a variety of settings. The persistence of a state-territorial conceptual framework is perhaps strongest in the places where its legal and material arrangements are waning in relative importance. For instance, Durand, Decoville, and Knippschild (2017) show that it is precisely in some of the most integrated cross-border regions in the European Union's core where Euroscepticism is at its strongest, while Brym (2011) documents the persistence of national identities in a functionally binational border region between Germany and Poland. These “habits” of territory (Duchacek, 1986) are notable for their persistence despite daily rhythms of life that would otherwise weaken them.

These examples of how state territoriality persists as an interpretive framework in the minds of ordinary people, of course, are mild when compared to the recent proliferation of anti-establishment political movements that use of territorial sovereignty as a synecdoche for a wide range of grievances. Vulgar territorial perspectives require not only territorial habits but also a fetishization of territory and its capacity to mark space and bodies (cf. Krasteva, 2017). This glorification of territory and borders requires more visceral elements to cement its increasingly widespread appeal. These can be found in territory's emotional and affective content, to which I now turn.

3 | VULGAR TERRITORY, PART 2: AFFECT AND EMOTION

I have argued that one key aspect of vulgar territory is that the idea of containerized sovereignty is embraced by a wide range of actors, including but also beyond state elites. However, the increasing prevalence of political movements that reject the conventions of the post-World War II center-left/center-right territorial consensus of relatively open borders depend on more than just a narrow view of territorial sovereignty. Vulgar territory's proponents, whether charismatic leaders, social media influencers or ordinary citizens do not simply harden the association between territory and sovereignty for tactical purposes; they have emotional stakes in such a joining. Even as they harness negative emotions of anger, resentment, and suspicion to mobilize supporters, expressions of vulgar territory also celebrate the boundedness, closure, and exclusion that are at its heart. In this way, they represent a desire for community, through authoritarian means if necessary, as much as they do fear of the other (cf. Ince, 2019).

Rather than seeing territory as a synonym for spatial sovereignty, Grosby (1995) seeks to understand how “our use of the word ‘territory’ refers not merely to a geometrically delineated space; it rather refers to the transcendental significance of that space; it refers to the life-ordering and life-sustaining significance of a space which makes that space into a meaningful structure” (1995, pp. 148–149). Political scientist Walker Connor, meanwhile, long insisted on the primarily psychological bases of ethnonationalist sentiment and conflict, positions that have been borne out by work in political and social psychology (Kaufman, 2018). While not referring explicitly to territory, Connor identified a sense of place-bound “shared blood” (1994) as key to mobilizing nationalist sentiment, overriding economic issues or interests.

Geographers have also recognized the emotional qualities that can be attached to place and space. In particular, feminist geopolitics has long insisted that affect and political space mutually construct each other. Crucially, as Pain and Smith (2008) note, emotion, and particularly fear, is constitutive of space rather than simply received: “Fear does not pop out of the heavens and hover in the ether before blanketing itself across huge segments of cities and societies; it has to be lived and made. Its making may only in very small ways be about the ‘large acts’ of terror that are played, replayed, revisited and reconstituted on an almost daily basis in the press. Increasingly, fear cuts across scales to connect global risks to local experience.” (p. 3) Indeed, the attribution of fear and anxiety to particular bodies that disrupt accepted spatial arrangements is generated at a variety of scales by actors in everyday encounters. Smith

sums this up by stating “bodies not only *are* territory but also *make* territory” (2012, p. 1511). In other words, bodies, homes, communities, and other spaces traditionally thought of as having limited agency amidst larger geopolitical processes are instrumental in constructing affective landscapes which are overlain with state-territorial practices.

A key aspect of work focusing on the relational production of emotion and space is its highlighting of the momentary and context-dependent nature of affective attachment to territory. Crucially, this recognition helps decenter the emotional constitution of the nation—and its territorial dimensions—from state-driven practice. While generating national-territorial sentiment is often the explicit goal of state rituals and spectacles, the content of these practices does not necessarily determine the kinds of attachments that can be fostered. Militz and Schurr (2016), for example, examine this by emphasizing the embodied nature of feelings of national belonging in Azerbaijan. In this, they set temporarily set aside fully articulated *meanings* of national symbols and rituals; rather, they focus on the production of *feelings* of attachment and alienation as bodies, symbols, and spaces come together in momentary assemblages. Antonsich (2016) further highlights the temporal and individuated aspect of national-territorial sentiment by foregrounding average people's agency in creating a fragmented, diverse set of nationalisms that can change from moment to moment, even from the perspective of the same person. These and other studies provide a useful bridge between the intention behind state-sponsored practices meant to generate certain kinds of territorial attachment and how these attempts are taken up and reproduced among the people who are being interpellated by them. It also notes that although negative emotions are often involved in the production of political space, neutral, positive, or even jubilant affect can be powerful contributors in this regard.

4 | VULGATES OF TERRITORY: HYPER-BORDERED AND FEMINIZED VARIATIONS ON A THEME

I have developed the concept of “vulgar territory” by focusing on what I argue are its two primary component parts: a simplistic vision of territorial sovereignty; and an affective commitment to, and celebration of, territory's ostensible primordial status. These elements help explain why certain articulations of exclusionary territorial regimes gain mass appeal: they need *both* a legalistic and affective logic so that they become justifiable in the eyes of their supporters. Drawing further from the metaphor of the Latin language and its vulgates that eventually became the Romance languages, I argue that actors who draw on vulgar territory develop “dialects” that represent their particular interests, fears, and hopes. Here, I classify two vulgates of territory in Table 1: *hyper-bordered* and *feminized* territory. These categories are neither exhaustive—there are certainly more that could be found—nor mutually exclusive. Rather, it is simply a matter of what elements are emphasized in each vulgate by those who tout it. Categorizing in this matter allows us to begin to identify common tropes and clichés employed to promote each territorial vulgate, as well as the policies prescribed to address the problems each narrative warns of.

In creating this preliminary typology, I am reemphasizing the argument that the category “territory” needs to be understood from the ground up: that is, not in a genealogical sense but rather as a phenomenon commonly

TABLE 1 Vulgates of territory

	Vulgate	Key principles	Desired outcome	Examples
Vulgar territory	Hyper-bordered	Ethnopluralism	Ethnonational separation	Ethnopluralist regions “Greater Hungary”
	Feminized	Racialized reproduction Racialized caring	Reproductive purity	Trad wives Restrictive food cultures Caring for one's “own”

misunderstood to be an eternal feature of political community. Likewise, it is necessary to temporarily take territorial vulgates at face value to understand the full depth of their misrepresentations of what it means to spatially belong.

4.1 | Hyper-bordered vulgar territory

Geographers have long understood that borders are social processes (Paasi, 1998) that constitute state territory through their functions in spatial socialization (Paasi, 1996) and performing state power (Johnson et al., 2011). Indeed, much work has gone into showing how borders are not fixed, abstract entities but must be continuously reproduced through embodied practices (Prokkola & Ridanpää, 2015). Other scholars have examined how bordering is a violent process of marking difference on bodies (Kovras & Robins, 2016; Mountz, 2004), allowing some to pass while keeping others in a state of subjugation (Sparke, 2006). This has led some to look beyond the state to alternate forms of socio-spatial organization in order to find possibilities for more progressive futures (e.g., Ince & Barrera de la Torre, 2016). Hyper-bordered vulgar territory, on the other hand, rejects a constructivist view of boundaries and calls for intensified forms of spatial separation—even attempting to outdo existing state practices in this regard.

As Spektorowski (2016) notes, postnational federalism, while seen on the left as a path to liberationist futures, need not necessarily lead to progressive outcomes. Ethnopluralism, the belief that ethnic, racial and/or religious groups should live in spatial isolation from one another, cloaks itself in the language of democracy even as it calls for exclusionary territorial forms. The basic political entity in this system is an ethnically homogenous community spread over its “natural” spatial extent, and federated to other similar units to make up a homogenous civilizational bloc of “Western” culture (Bar-On, 2008). Perhaps the most prolific exponent of this version of ethno-regionalism is Alain de Benoist, the leader of the French New Right. Against the contractual legal citizenship of the nation-state, de Benoist proposes a model of organic ethno-regional identity-based citizenship that claims to preserve the dignity of different cultures. Such rhetoric presents itself as being opposed to classical racism, with no inherent hierarchy of superior and inferior peoples. Ethnopluralist thought has been hugely influential in international right-wing activism, and has helped many populist parties achieve considerable mainstream electoral success by disassociating their main ideological draws—opposition to immigration, skepticism of multiculturalism, and defense of traditional culture—from older stigmatized far-right tropes such as biological racism, anti-Semitism, and open xenophobia (Carter, 2018; Elgenius & Rydgren, 2019). Aside from formalized politics, grassroots forms of ethnopluralism can be found in communities such as the Wolves of Vinland, which takes ethnopluralist principles to a logical extreme in a neo-Pagan cult with chapters across the United States (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2017).

Another instance of hyper-bordered vulgar territory can be found in various territorial fantasies that reimagine existing state borders to recall past periods of greatness or future expansion. These fantasies can be promoted by state agencies and actors: in an introduction to an edited volume on “cartographic anxieties,” Billé (2017) documents some instances of efforts to portray greater territorial extent such as the “vertical map” that places islands claimed by China in the South China Sea in visual equivalence with the mainland. This kind of defiant flouting of internationally recognized territorial claims also finds expression by nonstate actors who dream of restoring their nation's lost status. Molnár (2015), for instance, discusses this in the context of Hungary, where civil society organizations have been instrumental in circulating and promoting a series of symbols right that call back to mythologized elements of Hungarian national identity. The far-right organizations that draw on these symbols have been successful where leftist organizations have not in articulating an anticapitalist, antiausterity response based on mythic narratives of Hungarian resistance to outside invaders, and cartographic symbols of “Greater Hungary,” or a Hungary prior to its 1920 territorial losses. A similar case can be observed in Turkish maps documented by Batuman (2010). Particularly since the 1990s, cartographic representations of Turkish territory circulated in a variety of popular culture arenas have become detached from official maps and circulated as symbols reflecting long-held territorial anxieties.

4.2 | Feminized vulgar territory

Feminist political geographers have shown clearly how territory is constituted not only through abstract categories such as borders. Importantly, they have also demonstrated how embodied experience makes and unmakes territory on a daily basis (e.g., Smith, 2012; Smith et al., 2016). In much of this literature, the body is a site where state practices of marking difference and enforcing separation are reworked, contested, or subverted. In contrast, feminized vulgar territory calls attention to instances in which the body and its reproductive labor is harnessed—and sometimes given willingly—to exclude, separate, and even cleanse space for a racial or ethnonational group.

Of course, state attempts to direct natality through financial incentives and propaganda campaigns are familiar phenomena (Togman, 2019). Pronatalist policy and discourse aim at filling territory with bodies of the correct race and/or religion so as to mark it as unquestionably belonging to the in-group. These mechanisms to leverage sex geopolitically often run into the complexity of bodies that resist, however incompletely, such attempts (Smith, 2012). However, a growing number of voices outside of the state are taking up natalist themes as they signal the dangers of population decline and “replacement.” These are especially widespread in North America and Western Europe, where authors and activists on the right allege the “death of the West” due to hyper-fertile immigrant populations and their globalist enablers within western societies (Bialasiewicz, 2006). A group of women has taken it upon themselves to reverse this trend. Known as “trad wives” and organized principally online, they celebrate patriarchal values and traditional gender roles in a highly curated vision of female “empowerment.” Their agenda also includes the openly racist goal of using their bodies to produce additional white bodies, and so contribute towards whitening the racial landscape of their societies (Kelly, 2018). The kinds of “demographic fever dreams” (Gökarksel et al., 2019) that drive beliefs around fertility and potential population replacement are not limited to the industrialized west. Certain South Asian groups have also long held suspicions about higher birthrates among neighboring Muslim populations. In February 2018, a video of a Muslim restaurant owner in Ampara, Sri Lanka ostensibly admitting to placing “sterilization pills” in his food went viral, sparking violent riots. It later emerged that what had appeared as pills were in fact bits of dough, and the man’s shaky grasp of Sinhalese had led him to misunderstand the accusations leveled at him (Borham & Attanayake, 2018).

The narrative of population replacement also finds echoes in another universal element of human reproduction, food. The use of food culture to promote certain kinds of national citizens can be traced to at least the domestic science movement of the late-19th and early-20th centuries, when women’s groups took it upon themselves to educate immigrant women in preparing “correct” American cuisine rather than the food traditions they had brought with them (Tsank, 2018). This finds echoes in efforts to deny Muslim populations the opportunity to eat according to their dietary standards, although the motivation is quite different: in 2018, the mayor of the southern French city of Beaucaire, Julien Sanchez, banned alternatives to pork in school cafeterias. In an interview with the far-right Catholic magazine *Valeurs Actuelles*, he referenced the French variation on the population replacement narrative, stating that he refused to “assist in the ‘great replacement’ of pork in the cafeteria” (d’Ornellas, 2018). Other examples of weaponizing pork are not hard to find: In Denmark, the town council of Randers voted to require that public day care centers and kindergartens serve pork as a preemptive move to “preserve” Danish national identity (Bilefsky, 2016). And in Germany, a day care that proposed to ban pork from its menus required police protection due to the backlash their choice generated (the day care later reversed this decision) (Wallace, 2019).

Finally, themes of domesticity are employed by women on the far right to construct a vision of a national territory in which patriarchal understandings of the family root social life. Despite hedging somewhat on gender equality as a quality marking “Western” civilization apart from Muslim newcomers, a common refrain among these groups is that returning to “traditional” gender roles will cure societal ills. This results in a very particular understanding of care relations: rather than the potential to forge “spatially extensive connections of interdependence and mutuality” in the face of diminishing support structures (Lawson, 2007) care is reimagined as a spatially exclusionary activity. A common refrain heard from many nationalist groups is the moral imperative to “care for one’s own” before extending care to newcomers or strangers. Indeed, as Mulinari and Neergaard (2014) show, among women active in the far-

right Swedish Democrats party, *withholding* care from migrants and sending them back to their countries of origin are portrayed as caring responses to immigration pressures. Mulinari and Neergaard term this “racist care,” in which a racialized care ethic is used to locate both self and the other within mutually exclusive cultural and geographic categories.

5 | CONCLUSION

“Vulgar” territory, as defined here, are forms of thought and practice that draw on superficial understandings of exclusive, bordered territory animated by hope, fear, and other emotions. Vulgar territorial visions often thinly mimic state-territorial practices, and can be expressed by a range of actors, including but importantly not limited to those that represent the state and its institutions. Vulgar territory does not represent a new kind of territoriality or new territorial forms, but it is a lens that allows us to see three primary aspects of recent territorial rhetoric and practice. First, it refocuses our attention on hyper-exclusionary forms of territoriality that so far have not been the topic of thorough examination by geographers. In particular, I have highlighted forms of territorial praxis that somewhat defy the expectations of critical and feminist literature. Ethnopluralist thought, “trad wife” feminism and racist care all derive from potentially progressive geographic traditions. Instead, however, they represent forms of territorial exclusion that warp their origins toward reactionary ends.

Second, vulgar territory draws our attention away from the state to consider what “territory,” as the dominant form of socio-spatial organization in the contemporary world, looks like from the ground up. We must remember that spatial socialization, borders as processes, embodied territoriality and other scholarly concepts concerning territory are not recognized by the vast majority of subjects who think and act territorially. Rather, vulgar territory helps us see that their expressions of territory are scaffolded on blunt, thinly legalistic understandings of territory in some places and territorial hopes or fears in others.

Third, vulgar territory calls our attention to the boundary between state territorial practice and “grassroots” understandings of territory. The distinction is not always absolute: as Krasteva (2017) argues, “[e]veryday othering/bordering is not an alternative to but in unison with power, they are a ‘translation’ of the fence into a body, of national security into identity, of bordering into othering.” Vulgar territory especially highlights the territorial thinking of actors who, in Fregonese’s (2012) terms, “are not the state but resemble it, collaborate with it, or overpower it” (661). They may or may not realize their territorial visions, but we can recognize them in the way that they exaggerate existing forms of state territoriality or wax utopian in their territorial desires. We should be especially attentive to those forms of exclusionary spatial strategy that are not yet part of the state’s territorial toolkit, but are being mainstreamed by activists. What seems fringe, like ethnopluralism, may simply be at the vanguard of political movements that will eventually come to power and become a primary part of the state apparatus: borrowing from McConnell’s (2009) assertion that a focus on geopolitical anomalies may offer “a valuable glimpse of possible geopolitical futures” (1913), we may see in vulgar territory a valuable *warning* of possible geopolitical futures.

There are questions of methodology to be addressed in pushing the vulgar territorial framework further. In particular, what, empirically, separates longer term processes of spatial socialization (Paasi, 1996) from an extraordinary instance of vulgar territory? To what extent do ordinary, on-the-ground actors lead with vulgar territorial desires and state elites harness those desires? To partially answer these questions, I have argued that vulgar territory is *both* the emotional attachment and daily habits that socialize political subjects into the idea of territory, *and* an appeal to a superficially “logical” application of that socialization. Recognizing these two elements together helps us get inside of vulgar territorial narratives that, like the Trumpism I began the article with, have proved to be impermeable to outside critique.

Moving forward, we can use the concept of vulgar territory and its subcategories to tease apart populist and other insurgent territorial aspirations. One tactical innovation of contemporary ethnopluralist, nativist, and other identarian movements has been to portray themselves as transcending the traditional right–left political spectrum

and therefore to forge coalitions, which have served them well electorally. In such an environment, vulgar territory can provide a basis for making normative judgments about increasingly violent and exclusionary forms of territorial governance that are characterizing contemporary popular politics (cf. Lizotte, 2019). While we should of course keep in view the banal and extraordinary forms of violence done in the name of maintaining the state-territorial status quo, we should recognize that the democratically determined "will of the people" has proven in many cases to be equally, if not more brutal in its desire to spatially exclude bodies marked by their racial, national, and other forms of difference. State institutions, elites, and agents are dominant purveyors of territorial violence, but we must acknowledge that nonstate actors have also shown themselves to be willing and eager participants in policing and controlling territory.

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ORCID

Christopher Lizotte  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9585-8701>

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Christopher Lizotte is a postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Geosciences and Geography at the University of Helsinki. His past work has investigated the intersections of philanthropy and school reform in the United States, as well as the French concept of secularism, *laïcité*, and how it is manifested through political geographies of assimilation and negotiation through that country's school system. Currently, he is undertaking a project on European nativist and nationalist politics, particularly in how such political movements operationalize borders, territory, and other spatial concepts in their pursuit of exclusionary sovereignty. He has published in journals such as *Environment and Planning A*, *Political Geography*, and *The Canadian Geographer*.

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